



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Inspection report

Itchen College

Dates of inspection: 1–5 March 2004

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Basic information about the college

Name of college:	Itchen College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Barry Hicks
Address of college:	Middle Road Southampton SO19 7TB
Telephone number:	023 8043 5636
Fax number:	023 8042 1911
Chair of governors:	Rosemary Tong
Unique reference number:	130704
Name of reporting inspector:	Bev Barlow HMI
Dates of inspection:	1–5 March 2004

Part A: Summary

Information about the college

Itchen College is a sixth form college in the east of Southampton. It is located in the residential area of Sholing close to the M3 and M27 motorways and Southampton airport. Most of the college's work is on this site. Courses for adults are also offered in an increasing number of outreach centres. Southampton is a major commercial dock city with a population of 210,000. Unemployment at 2.5% is slightly below the national average. There are a large proportion of small-sized and medium-sized businesses. The main employment sectors are distribution and retailing, tourism, finance, engineering and public services. Within Southampton there is another sixth form college and a general FE college. In Southampton, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) pass rates and participation rates of school leavers are significantly and consistently below the national rates and those for Hampshire.

In 2003/04, the college enrolled almost 1,100 students aged 16 to 18 and approximately 1,200 aged 19 and over. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is 7.8 %, which is higher than the proportion in the local population. The college offers courses in 11 of the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) 14 areas of learning. In some of these areas courses are provided from foundation to advanced level. Over 40 subjects are offered at advanced subsidiary level (AS level) and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 12 subjects at GCSE. Full-time vocational courses are available in business studies, childcare, health and social care, public services, sport, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism.

The majority of full-time students aged 16 to 18 enrolled from one of the college's nine local partner secondary schools. About 56% of full-time students aged 16 to 18 are studying at advanced level on a wide range of academic and vocational courses. There are also a large number of students studying courses at level 2 and small numbers at foundation level. Many level 2 students are on the college's 'learn and earn' programme which allows them to combine full-time courses with paid employment and vocational qualifications. Adult students make up approximately 15% of the college's full-time equivalent students. The vast majority study part time and follow courses in information and communications technology (ICT) or basic skills. The college's mission is 'to be a force for change in the community by being: a dynamic community college which provides high-quality education and training for all and a cultural and sporting centre for its locality'.

How effective is the college?

Inspectors judged the quality of provision to be good in seven curriculum areas and satisfactory in ICT and social sciences. Overall provision in humanities was judged to be good and law was awarded a contributory grade of satisfactory. Leadership and management and support for students are good. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- the good progress made by students with low prior achievements
- much good teaching and learning
- good individual subject support provided by teachers
- detailed marking and feedback on students' work
- well-developed intranet
- effective leadership and management
- rigorous course reviews that address weaknesses
- wide range of courses and progression opportunities
- effective development of part-time adult community provision.

What should be improved

- retention rates on some courses
- attendance on GCSE courses
- access and use of computers in and out of lessons
- social areas for students
- access to parts of the building for students with restricted mobility
- arrangements for supporting all students with additional learning needs
- evaluation of students' destinations.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas

The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5).

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science and mathematics	Good. Pass rates on most courses are above average but retention rates are below average on some courses. Teaching is stimulating and teachers make good use of a wide variety of methods; there is insufficient use of information and learning technologies (ILT) on some courses. A wide range of courses is responsive to students' needs and provides good progression opportunities. Students are well motivated and the standard of work is high. Science laboratories are outdated.
Business	Good. The curriculum area is managed well. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. Teaching is good and is planned well to include rigorous assessment that effectively promotes learning. The pass and retention rate on AS-level accounting are poor. A low proportion of GNVQ intermediate and foundation students achieve high grades.
Information and communications technology	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning in many lessons are good and there are insufficient resources for students' practical work. Pass and retention rates are low on most full-time courses and are high on most part-time courses for adults. An extensive range of learning materials is available on the college's intranet but computing students have insufficient exposure to the industry. A wide range of courses is available and has successfully widened participation.
Sports, leisure and tourism	Good. Pass rates on GCE A level and advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) are good. Most teaching is good and effectively engages students. Students produce high-quality written work and demonstrate good practical skills. There is a wide range of provision and very good enrichment opportunities in sport. There are low pass rates on the community sports leadership award and GCSE physical education.

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Health and social care and public services	Good. Pass and retention rates are high on many courses. Much of the teaching is good, but in a minority of lessons some students are not challenged and there is insufficient use of ILT to support learning. Attendance on public services courses is poor. A wide range of courses provides good progression routes and prepare students well for employment. The quality of students' work is good and they have access to regular work placements to enhance their learning.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass rates are high on many courses but there are some low retention rates. There is good teaching in media and drama. Practical work is of a high standard, students' work is marked in detail and their progress is carefully monitored. Accommodation in drama, music and three-dimensional design is unsatisfactory. Curriculum management is good and teachers share good practice.
Humanities	Good. The contributory grade for law is satisfactory . Pass rates are very high on most courses and many students achieve a grade higher than that predicted by their GCSE results. However, pass rates on AS-level law are low and have declined over the last three years. Retention rates on most courses are around the national averages; however, in AS-level government and politics, retention rates have improved but are still low. Students benefit from high-quality learning resources and good individual support across all subjects. Enrichment provision is very good in geography and history.
Social sciences	Satisfactory. Pass rates are good on GCE A level, but below average on AS-level courses and GCSE sociology. Students benefit from well-written course workbooks and learning resources on the intranet. Students' progress is monitored closely, teachers give detailed feedback on students' work and this helps them to improve. Self-assessment is rigorous and has led to improvements in teaching and learning resources and the diagnosis of students' support needs.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Pass rates on most courses are good. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level Spanish and GCSE English are low. Teaching is good and is planned well to include rigorous assessment and good individual support for students. Teaching is good; enthusiastic teachers are skilful in engaging students in lively debates. Leadership and management are good.

How well is the college led and managed?

Leadership and management are good. The new principal, senior managers and governors have revised the mission statement and set a clear strategic direction for the college. These are shared by staff and students throughout the college. The college mainly serves full-time students aged 16 to 18, but managers have worked hard to broaden the curriculum and widen participation. The college has been successful in expanding part-time adult provision and better meeting the needs of the local community. Curriculum management is good in most areas. Managers provide clear leadership and there is a strong emphasis on improving teaching and learning and raising students' achievements. Students make good progress in comparison with their prior achievements. Self-assessment throughout the college is good. Comprehensive action plans are produced and these result in clear targets for future improvements. Substantial improvements have been made to the college's management information system. The college's financial management has improved and it provides good value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?

The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. The college has successfully widened participation by extending its range of courses for students aged 16 to 18. The learn and earn initiative for level 2 students has contributed to an increase in the staying-on rate in education by school leavers in Southampton. There is good collaboration with other education and training providers to promote lifelong learning, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Adult and community provision in basic skills and ICT has been expanded and includes provision for asylum seekers. The college's response to legislation on the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA) is satisfactory; college policies have been revised and published to meet the requirements of current legislation. The college has not yet developed an action plan for the implementation of these policies. Careful attention is given to the needs of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Despite recent improvements, some parts of the college are not accessible to wheelchair users and those with mobility difficulties.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?

Support and guidance for students are good. Links with partner schools are very strong and the college organises a range of taster days and other events to provide effective advice and guidance to Year 11 pupils. The induction process is thorough and helps students to settle quickly in to college life. Support from personal tutors and student services staff is highly valued by students. The initial assessment of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There are insufficient resources and specialist staff to meet the increased demand for learning support. The impact of additional learning support on raising standards is not formally evaluated. Individual tutorials are used well to monitor the progress of students. The college has effectively used the wider key skill in Improving own learning and performance to develop students' independent study skills. Group tutorials are less effective and are not valued by students. There are insufficient opportunities for students to

develop their personal and social skills. Teachers provide much valuable informal subject support for students. Arrangements for providing information on careers and progression to higher education (HE) are very good. Appropriate provision is made to ensure child protection. A high proportion of students progress into HE.

Students' views of the college

Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below.

What students like about the college

- friendly and helpful staff
- relaxed atmosphere
- good support from student services
- wide range of courses and additional activities
- helpful advice and guidance for careers and HE.

What they feel could be improved

- availability of information technology (IT) resources
- social space in the college
- college security
- car parking space
- price of refectory food.

Other information

The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC should send to Ofsted only action plans from colleges that have been judged inadequate or have been awarded a grade 4 or 5 for curriculum provision, work-based learning and/or leadership and management.

Part B: The college as a whole

Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect and learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16–18	75	22	3
19+ and WBL*	57	43	0
Learning 16–18	72	26	2
19+ and WBL*	57	43	0

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

**work-based learning*

Achievement and standards

16 to 18 year olds

1. Around 93% of the college's 1,100 full-time students are aged 16 to 18. Approximately 56% of full-time students study advanced level qualifications. The overall pass rate on level 3 courses is around the national average for sixth form colleges. The retention rate has improved from 63% in 2000 to 87% in 2003 and is now equal to the national average. Overall retention and pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level courses fell slightly in 2003 to just below the national averages. In 2003, 22 out of 34 GCE A-level subjects had 100% pass rates. On AVCE courses, retention rates have improved from 71% in 2001 to 84% in 2003; pass rates also improved significantly from 67% in 2001 to 91% in 2003. The proportion of students achieving high grades is very good in AVCE business and health and social care. In 2002 and 2003, 100% retention and pass rates were achieved on national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3 courses.

2. Data which compares students' results at GCE A-level with their previous GCSE achievements, show that overall, students do much better than might be expected. The degree of improvement is considerable in art and design, history, business studies, English language, English language and literature and geography. However, many students achieve below their expected grade in mathematics, German, Spanish, music and electronics. Data for other subjects show students achieving results broadly in line with expectations on entry. Department for Education and Skills (DfES) performance tables for 2003 show that the average point score for each student at advanced level was 232.3 and the average point score for each exam entry was 73.8. Both these figures are above the local averages for

Southampton but below the national averages for all schools and colleges. Progression to HE is good; over 85% of students applying to university secured a place in 2003.

3. Level 2 pass rates are consistently above the national average. Retention rates on level 2 courses improved significantly in 2002 and are now around the national average. In the 12 GCSE courses offered, the A* to C pass rates in 2003 were well above the national averages in mathematics, art and design, expressive arts and nautical studies. GCSE A* to C pass rates are low in English, music, sociology and physical education. Pass rates on intermediate general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses improved significantly to 89% in 2003. The proportion of students with high grades is low in business and ICT. Intermediate GNVQ retention rates were 10% above the national averages in 2001 and 2002, but fell to 82% in 2003. NVQ level 2 retention and pass rates have been very good and close to 100% over the last three years. At level 1, the pass rate in 2002, at 85%, is much higher than the national average of 78%. However, college data for 2003 shows a significant fall in the pass rates to 69%; this is 7% below the national average. Retention rates have fallen over the last three years to 77% in 2003; this is slightly below the national average.

4. Overall, retention rates on the three main key skills of ICT, application of number and communication are high and well above the national averages. In 2003, the retention rate on the wider key skill of improving own learning and performance was 100%, but only 39% of students achieved the key skill qualification. In 2003, the pass rates on ICT key skill at level 1 and level 3, at 70% and 68%, respectively, were well above the national averages. Students on ICT at level 2 were less successful; 34% gained the qualification. Overall, the pass rates on application of number and communication at level 1, 2 and 3 are low.

5. Students' work is of a good standard. Levels of students' attainment were highest in business studies, science and mathematics. Attainment was mostly satisfactory in sport, health and social care, public services and social sciences. Students' written work is very good in English and humanities. Students' work in sociology, psychology and law is not always supported by sufficient relevant evidence. Art work is good and students' achievements are displayed effectively throughout the college. Students respond well to questions and discuss ideas with confidence. In media, English, business studies, geography and history, students contribute enthusiastically to discussions and debates. They demonstrate good powers of analysis and confidently use specialist vocabulary. Students demonstrate good practical skills in science, sport and visual and performing arts. In science practical lessons, students use their knowledge of theory to predict the outcomes of experiments. Performance work in drama and dance is of a high standard, with students demonstrating good technical ability. In most subjects students use the internet well for research. GNVQ and AVCE students have developed good project-planning skills and their assignments are presented well. The standard of coursework is high. In English, ICT and health and social care, students have effectively acquired the skills to work independently.

Adult learners

6. Most adult students study part time, either in the college during the day and evening or in outreach centres in the community. In the last three years, retention rates for adults

have been equal to or above the national averages for all courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. In 2002, pass rates on courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 were well above the national averages but fell below average in 2003 at levels 1 and 2.

7. The pass rates of adult students on courses in book-keeping, care, computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) and Access to HE are very good. The pass rates on courses in computerised accounts, European computer driving licence (ECDL) and photography are low. The standard of work produced by adults is generally good.

8. The average attendance during the inspection was 82%; this is slightly below the national average of 85%. Attendance to GCSE classes observed by inspectors was poor, at 32%. The start of a minority of lessons was disrupted by poor punctuality.

Quality of education and training

9. Inspectors observed and graded 147 lessons. Almost 90% of lessons observed involved students aged 16 to 18; nearly 70% were level 3 courses. Of the lessons inspected, 73% of teaching was good or better, 24% was satisfactory and 3% was unsatisfactory. These grades are in line with the national average for sixth-form colleges. The proportion of lessons graded very good and outstanding was 30%, this is below the average of 36% in sixth-form colleges. In five of the nine areas inspected, no teaching was judged as less than satisfactory.

10. Students' learning was judged to be good or better in 71% of lessons, satisfactory in 27% of lessons and less than satisfactory in 2% of lessons. The proportion of lessons graded as less than satisfactory was less than the national average; however, the proportion of lessons in which learning was graded outstanding was low. In the observation of adult classes, no teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.

11. The best lessons have clear objectives which are shared with the students, who are clear about what they need to do. Mathematics lessons often start with quick 'warm-up' exercises to reinforce previous learning. Many lessons are well planned and cover a range of stimulating activities that take into account the learning styles of students. Learning materials are of a high quality and many are available on the college's intranet. Students are well motivated, work independently and enjoy the lessons. In health and social care, students discuss their work with confidence while respecting the views of others. Teachers use imaginative ways to stimulate students' interest and promote learning. In PE, tai chi was used to explore the methods of teaching skills in sport, which also exposed students to different cultures. Teachers provide good one-to-one support during group work, regularly check individual learning and maintain a brisk pace. In many lessons, students work well in pairs and can clearly articulate their views; this often leads to purposeful group debate. In English, teachers skilfully use effective questioning of students to promote and develop the discussion. Teachers on health and social care and business administration courses draw on students' experiences at work to inform and improve lessons. Foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to improving students' listening and speaking skills.

12. In the weaker lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to the ability range in their classes and do not plan for the variety of needs. Activities are not demanding, extension tasks are completed by the whole class and the more able students are not challenged sufficiently. In some lessons, the low number of students limits the range of teaching activities. Teachers do not always plan their lessons appropriately when there are a few students. In a minority of curriculum areas, there is an over-reliance on workbooks. In these lessons, there is insufficient use of targeted questions to test out and extend the level of students' understanding. Some lessons proceed too slowly and not all students are involved in the work so they become bored. Teachers spend too much time talking, leaving insufficient time for students to complete the activity. In some curriculum areas, for example, media, chemistry, mathematics and art and design there is too little use of ILT in lessons.

13. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge and expertise. A significant number of teachers are examiners or moderators with awarding bodies. The small numbers of teachers who do not have a teaching qualification are supported well by the college, and are in the process of completing a relevant teaching qualification. Teachers on vocational courses have appropriate assessor and verifier awards. Opportunities for professional and personal development are good. Staff development is linked to the college's objectives and priority is given to improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are three ILT 'champions' who support teachers in the use of ILT and the development of teaching and learning resources. Induction for teachers new to the college is comprehensive, and in their first year they benefit from an experienced colleague acting as a mentor.

14. The college's accommodation has steadily improved and is mostly good. The college has a welcoming atmosphere and students' achievements are celebrated through attractive displays of their work. In subject-specific teaching rooms, there are informative displays but some general teaching rooms are drab and uninspiring. Access for people with restricted mobility has improved, but a few classrooms, science laboratories and the temporary accommodation remain inaccessible to them. The good sports facilities are used well by students in the day and by the local community in the evening and at weekends. Social space for students is insufficient and the student centre and refectory are crowded at lunch and break times. There is a nursery with 47 places. Accommodation at outreach centres used by the college for adult provision and asylum seekers is generally good.

15. The library and drop-in IT centre is used well by students. Library staff are responsive to the needs of students and teachers, and there is an adequate range of books, journals, CD-ROMs and video material. In some curriculum areas, there is a shortage of popular texts and some of the books are dated. The ratio of computers to students is very good. Despite this, students often have difficulty gaining access to computers. The drop-in IT centre is often used for teaching. Computers are dispersed in classrooms around the college but they are not always in the most appropriate rooms to benefit students. The college's website is well designed and the intranet contains some very good learning materials and useful links to relevant internet sites. In some classrooms, teachers do not have access to computers which inhibits the use of ILT to support students' learning.

16. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. Assessment is regular and appropriate and informs students' future learning well. The assessment system in English is exemplary. Assignment briefs for students on English courses contain guidance to help them achieve good marks. Curriculum areas produce detailed procedures for assessment and moderation; these are clearly communicated to students. Work is set regularly and is usually marked and returned promptly. Marking is in line with awarding body requirements. On GCSE courses, students often fail to meet the deadlines set for submission of homework and assignments. Students receive informative and constructive feedback on the standard of their work and how they can improve it. In social sciences, teachers give comprehensive written feedback linked to students' target grades. On business administration and sports courses, internal verification is well planned and effective.

17. Students' progress is monitored regularly and rigorously. Teachers and personal tutors monitor students' progress in relation to target grades, based on their GCSE results. The academic progress of students is formally monitored in reviews that take place twice each year. Students value the one-to-one interviews with their personal tutors and subject teachers. Students are given clear targets and made aware of what they need to do in order to succeed. Teachers know their students well. There is early identification of students who cause concern and there are effective procedures to monitor students who are under-performing. Prompt action is taken in cases of low attendance.

18. The college offers a wide range of courses, mainly at level 3, to meet the needs of school leavers. Over 40 subjects are offered at AS level and GCE A level and 8 advanced level vocational courses. A full-time Access to HE course is offered to adults. Provision at level 1 and level 2 has been extended to better meet the needs of students and enable progression to the next level of study or to employment. Currently, provision at level 2 includes GNVQ intermediate programmes in business studies, IT, leisure and tourism, Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first certificates in childcare, sport and public services and 12 subjects at GCSE. GNVQ foundation courses are available in business and retail. In mathematics and humanities there are master classes for exceptional Year 10 pupils from partner schools. The college is responsive to the local community and is involved in a number of projects that support disadvantaged groups. The college successfully attracts part-time adult students mainly to ICT and literacy and numeracy courses.

19. All students benefit from the wide range of curriculum enrichment activities and additional qualifications that are available to them. These include team and recreational sports, drama and music productions, the college radio and Christian union. The variety of short courses includes word processing, sports coaching and first aid qualifications. Many students are able to participate in learning activities that complement their courses, such as foreign visits, field trips and educational visits to the theatre and art galleries.

20. The college works closely with employers on the learn and earn project for level 2 students and in arranging work shadowing, which is available to all students. However, links with employers are uneven across the college. In some curriculum areas, such as leisure,

tourism and sport, health and social care and public services, they are good but they are underdeveloped in ICT and business.

21. The college has a clear policy on the provision of key skills. All full-time students have the opportunity to develop their skills in ICT, communication and application of number, at the level which suits their needs. The majority of students choose ICT. All students undertake the wider key skill of improving own learning and performance which is developed through tutorials. The provision is well managed; key skills co-ordinators work closely with teachers to provide support in the teaching and assessment of key skills. Schemes of work and assignments clearly identify the opportunities for students to gain accreditation for key skills. Separate key skills lessons are provided each week. In response to some low pass rates in key skills in 2003, additional time has been allocated to support students in completing their key skills portfolios.

22. Prospective students receive very good information about the college and its courses. The college has excellent links with local schools, provides 'taster' days and open evenings and participates regularly in schools' careers events. Designated staff keep in close contact with partner schools and ensure a smooth transition for students from school to college. Students who have applied to the college are invited to a well-organised introduction conference in the summer term. This event takes place over three days and enables students to meet their tutors and sample lessons. The college provides clear and impartial guidance during the GCSE results' week. Each student is interviewed during the first week of the autumn term when subject choices are finalised. Late entrants receive very good individual attention. Induction procedures allow students to settle quickly into college life. A formal change of course procedure is rigorously followed. The number of students who decide to leave early is very low.

23. Processes to identify learning support needs are well developed. For example, students may refer themselves, or their needs may be identified at interview, during completion of the learning agreement or at any time during a student's time in college. A computer-based assessment package, which all full-time students complete, identifies learning styles, possible dyslexia issues and study skills needs. Teachers often use the information gained in order to effectively plan their lessons. The initial assessment and support for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Assessment of less specific needs is not as effective. The number of students identified as needing additional support has increased significantly. There are insufficient resources and specialist staff to meet the increase in demand. Of the 132 students identified as needing learning support at the start of the academic year, only 67 students with specific learning difficulties were receiving support, either in lessons or through individual sessions in the study centre. Timetabled subject support is available in mathematics but this is not the case in other subject areas. The impact of learning support on raising standards is not formally evaluated. In all areas, teachers provide a high level of informal, but important, support for individual students in their own time. Students attending evening lessons are informed of the learning support available during the day but very few adults take up this opportunity.

24. Students receive good support from their personal tutor. Students meet as a group on a weekly basis for 20 minutes to complete administrative processes, receive updates from the college bulletin and make appointments to meet with their personal tutor. The college tutorial system is based on regular one-to-one reviews. Students value these meetings, in which personal tutors help them to review their progress, monitor attendance and check they are meeting the targets they have been set. These reviews support students in achieving the wider key skill, improving own learning and performance. Students see little point in attending group tutorials. Although the college organises college-wide events to target issues such as health promotion, the tutorial programme provides limited opportunities to develop their personal and social skills.

25. There are thorough arrangements for supporting students who are applying to HE. The number of students who progress to HE is high and the college is working closely with local and regional universities to encourage wider participation. All students have access to high-quality careers guidance. Links with the local Connexions partnership are highly effective. Personal advisors are available to offer careers interviews as well as to help students gain access to the local job market. The college makes good use of the wider key skill of 'improving own learning and performance', to develop students' confidence in applying for jobs and HE. The college does not sufficiently evaluate students' destinations.

26. Appropriate provision is made to ensure child protection. A designated member of staff liaises with the local social services and other external agencies to ensure vulnerable students are supported effectively. There is a college counsellor available one day a week to provide support for personal issues. Financial help for students is provided appropriately through the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme as well as the college's hardship fund.

Leadership and management

27. Leadership and management are good. Weaknesses identified during the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The new principal, together with senior managers and governors, has set a clear strategic direction for the college and produced a detailed and revised mission statement, strategic objectives and values for the period 2003 to 2006. The principal and senior managers provide effective leadership and have worked hard with staff and governors to review the mission and improve the finances of the college. The quality of education and training is good in most curriculum areas. Overall, retention and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 have improved and are around the national average for sixth form colleges. Students make good progress in comparison with their prior achievements. Retention and pass rates on courses for adult students are generally above the national averages. A significant increase in the number of full-time students in 2003 has improved the college's financial position.

28. Senior managers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and work effectively as a team. Their consideration of matters relating to strategy, finance, quality and curriculum developments is supported well by clear management information and reports. Curriculum management is good overall. Faculty directors, assisted by learning area managers, are

responsible for curriculum planning and quality, timetabling and student support. In most curriculum areas, these arrangements work well and there is effective team working. Meetings are used effectively to share teaching materials, and good practice and has been identified in lesson observations. Results of student questionnaires and focus groups inform course planning in many areas. Aspects of leadership and management were identified as a key strength in business studies, visual and performing arts and media and English.

29. Communication in the college is good. The values and objectives of the college, as an inclusive community college, are understood and promoted by staff at all levels. Staff are fully informed about all aspects of college business through regular staff meetings and bulletins. They appreciate the open and consultative style of senior management and feel that managers value their opinions. The college intranet provides easy access to student data, policy statements and the staff handbook.

30. Quality assurance is good and leads to improvements. There is a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Rigorous and accurate self-assessment procedures are in place for academic and support areas and they result in comprehensive action plans. Course reviews examine progress against the previous year's plan. Targets are set and progress is judged against key performance indicators. These include enrolment numbers, retention and pass rates and consideration of students' prior achievements. Governors are actively involved in the review of self-assessment, and monitor progress carefully at the education quality and standards committee.

31. Governors bring a broad range of professional skills and are strongly committed to the success of the college. They are well informed about the college's strengths and weaknesses and play an important role in the planning process. The principal and senior managers provide detailed reports on the college's financial and academic performance, which enable governors to effectively carry out their duties. Governors and senior managers set targets for recruitment and retention and pass rates and these are monitored closely. The minutes of governors' meetings are available on the college's intranet. The chair of the corporation and other members regularly attend college events to celebrate students' success.

32. An effective appraisal system contributes directly to the identification of staff development needs. For teaching staff, the outcomes of lesson observations inform the appraisal process. Some part-time staff who teach adults in the community have not been observed. All staff are appraised every year. Individual targets are linked to the college's strategic objectives and the development plan of the area in which they work. An appropriate amount of the college's budget is invested in professional development. Comprehensive records are kept of staff development activities. Teachers and administrative and support staff particularly value the training and development opportunities they receive. The college obtained Investors in People accreditation in November 2003.

33. The college demonstrates its commitment to equal opportunities by ensuring all courses are fully inclusive. A strong emphasis is placed on widening participation; there has been significant expansion of provision at levels 1 and 2 and in basic skills in the community. Equal opportunities are effectively promoted through teaching and learning in performing

arts, English and history. The college complies with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and SENDA. An equal opportunities committee is responsible for implementing the revised equal opportunities policy, reporting to governors and organising events to celebrate diversity. All staff have undertaken appropriate training in equality and diversity. Data on students and their achievements are now analysed by gender, ethnicity and disability. The underachievement of male students was identified as a priority in 2002. Pass rates for the college in 2003 show that male students performed slightly better than females. Careful attention is given to the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, not all parts of the college are accessible to wheelchair users and those with mobility difficulties.

34. Substantial improvements have been made to the college's management information system since the last inspection. The data is generally accurate. Managers and most teachers have been trained in the use of the data to set targets, identify weaknesses and monitor progress. Good use is being made of data on enrolments to target marketing activities in local schools and the community. Staff have good access to individual student's information on the intranet. Details, for example, on students' attendance, learning styles, additional support needs and individual e-mail addresses enable teachers to easily communicate with students, and closely monitor their progress.

35. The financial management of the college has recently improved. In 2001/02, the college was experiencing financial difficulties, enrolments had been below target and it was operating at a budget deficit. In 2002/03, the college achieved its funding target. A combination of prudent cost savings and increases in revenue have improved the college's finances. Financial reports are now clear; senior managers and governors are closely monitoring the college's financial performance. The governors have set targets for key financial indicators but some short-term targets are too ambitious. Given the increased enrolments and students' good achievements, the college currently provides good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas

Science and mathematics

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on level 1 managing money
- high pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level biology and further maths
- high standard of students' work
- good teaching that challenges and motivates students
- wide range of courses with good progression opportunities.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCE A-level mathematics and AS-level chemistry and biology
- low pass rates in AS-level chemistry and AS-level physics
- outdated laboratories in science
- inadequate ILT to support teaching and learning.

Scope of provision

36. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in science and mathematics from level 1 to level 3 which provide good progression routes. Courses include AS-level and GCE A-level biology, chemistry, physics, electronics, mathematics and further mathematics and GCSE chemistry, physics and science. Free-standing mathematics qualifications are offered at levels 1 to 3 as alternative courses to GCSE and AS-level mathematics. Around 130 students are studying free-standing mathematics qualifications; they are mainly used to prepare students for progression on to higher level qualifications. At the time of the inspection, there were around 260 students on advanced level science courses and 180 undertaking advanced level mathematics courses. GCSE mathematics is the most popular subject with around 185 students and around 60 students are on GCSE science courses.

Achievement and standards

37. Pass rates on most GCE A-level courses are good but are low in AS-level chemistry and physics. A* to C pass rates are above the national averages in GCSE mathematics and

science. On the level 1 managing money course, the pass rate is high and many students achieve high grades. Retention rates are low on GCE A-level mathematics and AS-level chemistry and biology. In 2003, GCE A-level biology, further mathematics and physics students achieved higher grades than those predicted from their GCSE results. However, students in AS-level physics and GCE A-level mathematics achieved grades much lower than those predicted.

38. The standard of students' written work is high, with good attention to presentation and effective use of IT in the production of coursework. Students develop safe and efficient practical skills in science and can effectively link theory with practical work. Students develop good verbal skills and correctly use scientific and mathematical language in discussions. Around 20% of level 1 students progress to a level 2 course, and almost 50% of AS-level students successfully complete the progress on to GCE A level in the subject. Progression to HE is good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Free-standing mathematics qualification managing money	1	No. of starts	42	67	65
		% retention	76	57	75
		% pass rate	78	84	78
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	163	187	179
		% retention	74	76	78
		% pass rate	44	51	47
AS-level biology	3	No. of starts	68	77	49
		% retention	78	82	71
		% pass rate	68	79	86
AS-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	99	90	86
		% retention	90	81	87
		% pass rate	64	67	71

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
AS-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	47	45	52
		% retention	83	89	75
		% pass rate	79	78	72
AS-level physics	3	No. of starts	41	35	45
		% retention	95	91	91
		% pass rate	64	66	68
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	33	17	28
		% retention	45	94	96
		% pass rate	100	88	96

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

39. The majority of teaching is good or better. A wide range of teaching and learning methods are used effectively to challenge and motivate learners. Lessons are planned well and take into account students' different learning styles and abilities. For example, in a physics lesson on accelerated particles, a mixture of PowerPoint presentations, paired discussion, directed questioning and practical demonstrations were used to support students in planning their own experiments. Students quickly demonstrated a very good understanding of the key principles. In a chemistry practical lesson, students skilfully applied their knowledge on the reaction of halates with iron and iodide solutions to predict the outcomes of their experiments.

40. In the best lessons, teachers regularly check learning and encourage students to contribute their ideas and think for themselves. In most lessons, teachers skilfully question students, drawing on their knowledge and ideas to develop new concepts. In some mathematics lessons, students write their responses to questions on individual whiteboards. Teachers quickly check their understanding and provide good individual support. In mathematics lessons, warm-up exercises are used effectively to reinforce learning from previous lessons. At the start of a managing money lesson, students had to match questions on fractions or percentages with a 'what I would do' card. This technique was very effective in engaging the students in discussion; their responses to questions demonstrated a good understanding of the processes used in the calculations. In the less effective lessons, there is insufficient checking of learning and some students do not contribute to discussions.

41. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. There is a common policy for setting, marking and returning homework. Work is set regularly and returned promptly. Teachers' comments are helpful and tell students what they need to do in order to improve their work. Grades awarded are compared with individual students' target grades, which are based on their GCSE results. Students are clear about their performance. Progress against these targets is formally monitored twice a year.

42. There is good support for students in and out of lessons. Extra help is available in timetabled support lessons and lunchtime workshops and informally at other times. Students value the support they receive. Students identified as having additional learning needs receive extra support and teachers liaise effectively with additional support staff.

43. Equipment and resources are generally good. Dedicated rooms for mathematics and science teaching have stimulating displays of students' work and a good range of practical resources. Good technical support exists in each of the three core sciences. Science laboratories are out of date; it is difficult to organise group work and they are not accessible to students in wheelchairs. The intranet is well developed and includes high-quality learning resources that students can gain access to from home. Biology students frequently use the class set of laptops but on other course there is insufficient access to ILT for use in the classrooms and laboratories.

Leadership and management

44. Leadership and management are good. Good teamwork is leading to improvements in the students' experience. Classroom observation procedures and self-assessment are rigorous and action is identified to address weaknesses. For example, a new AS-level biology course was introduced last year. In 2003, AS-level biology pass rates improved significantly and most students achieved better grades than those predicted from their GCSE results. Good practice is regularly shared, both formally and informally. New teachers are supported well by their mentor and staff in the area. Staff development needs are clearly identified and staff regularly attend training courses to develop teaching and learning methods.

Business

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on most courses
- much good teaching that promotes effective learning
- highly effective assessment practice
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rate and low retention rates on AS-level accounting
- low proportion of high-grade passes on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses.

Scope of provision

45. The college offers AS level and GCE A level in business and economics, AS level in accounting, AVCE business and GNVQ foundation and intermediate. BTEC national diploma is being offered for the first time this year, to replace AVCE, which the college is phasing out. Business administration courses include NVQ at levels 1, 2 and 3, and word processing. At the time of inspection, approximately 350 full-time students were enrolled on business courses; the majority were aged 16 to 18. Part-time courses are offered in practical book-keeping and computerised accounting. Around 80 adult students are enrolled on these courses.

Achievement and standards

46. There are good pass rates on many courses. Pass rates of 100% were achieved in GCE A-level economics, GCE A-level business studies and AVCE business in 2003. Pass rates for GNVQ foundation, GNVQ intermediate, AS-level economics and level 2 NVQ administration are also above the national averages. Retention rates are high on a range of courses. GCE A-level economics, GCE A-level business studies and NVQ level 2 administration all retained 100% of their students in 2003. However, the pass and retention rates for GCE AS-level accounting are poor and both have declined steadily over the last three years. The proportion of high grades on GNVQ foundation and intermediate are significantly below national averages. Most students make progress at least in line with what is predicted from their entry qualifications and in GCE A-level business studies, many students achieve grades beyond those predicted by their GCSE results.

47. Students show good development of research, analytical and evaluative skills. They make good use of IT skills in researching, preparing and presenting assignments. Students successfully develop verbal skills and participate in informed rational discussions. For example, in a BTEC national lesson on staff recruitment and selection, students presented a well-argued analysis of the merits of candidates shown in an interview video. An enthusiastic discussion followed: students used reasoned arguments to present their ideas and respected each other's views. Attendance and punctuality are good.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business and administration, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	23	22	23
		% retention	91	95	83
		% pass rate	62	86	95
NVQ administration	2	No. of starts	31	30	33
		% retention	97	87	100
		% pass rate	100	100	97
AS-level accounting	3	No. of starts	18	42	51
		% retention	83	86	73
		% pass rate	60	42	27
AS-level business studies	3	No. of starts	111	120	93
		% retention	70	83	84
		% pass rate	96	88	86
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	21	*	31
		% retention	62	*	100
		% pass rate	100	*	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	49	52	55
		% retention	47	94	100
		% pass rate	100	92	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

48. There is much good teaching which promotes effective learning. Careful lesson planning ensures that appropriate demands are placed upon students and that there is a variety of activities to meet the needs and interests of all students. Good questioning techniques probe and challenge students. There is a strong and supportive rapport between teachers and students which helps to build trust and confidence. Students participate well in class. Teachers make good use of students' own experiences at work to develop a deeper understanding of theoretical concepts. For example, in a lesson on management styles, students used their own experiences of managers to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of different styles of management. In some lessons, where computer resources are available, ILT is used effectively to consolidate learning. In one lesson, students used the Internet to research the topic of factoring. They produced a well-structured guide on credit control; the work was emailed to the teacher for marking. In most classes, teachers monitor students' learning carefully to ensure they are making appropriate progress. In the less effective lessons, there was insufficient checking of students' learning and some students did not respond to questions from the teacher.

49. Assessment practice is highly effective. The assessment policy is made available to all students and is implemented consistently. Assignments are designed well and assessed rigorously. Students' work is returned promptly; detailed feedback indicates clearly what the students need to do in order to improve. Internal verification and moderation procedures are consistently applied and well documented.

50. Friendly and accessible staff provide good academic and personal support for students. However, group tutorials have limited impact on the development of students' personal and study skills. For example, a GNVQ foundation tutorial session only dealt with administrative matters rather than personal development. Induction is planned and implemented well. Students receive good information, advice and guidance prior to, and at the start of their course.

51. The range of courses at levels 1 to 3 enables students to be placed on the most appropriate courses to meet their needs. There are effective, well-planned and integrated arrangements for work experience on business administration courses. On other business

courses, work experience is voluntary and fewer students use this opportunity to link their studies to the world of work. However, teachers use students' other employment experiences in the classroom to enhance learning. Visiting speakers and trips to local businesses enable students to gain good insights into the practical aspects of business. Formal links with employers to inform decisions about curriculum offer and delivery, although developing, are still limited.

52. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic. Staff development activities are used to improve teaching and learning. Some staff do not have recent industrial or commercial experience. Teaching accommodation is good but there is insufficient access to computers. Teachers produce high-quality learning resources; many are placed on the intranet and shared with colleagues. There is a good range of books in the learning centre, although some texts are dated.

Leadership and management

53. Leadership and management are good. There is good teamwork, meetings are held regularly and minuted actions are closely monitored. Teachers share materials and work closely to improve students' learning and develop the work of the area. Managers make good use of data to inform course review and planning. Self-assessment is rigorous. Improvement strategies have been put in place to address identified weaknesses. For example, action has been implemented to improve GCE A-level accounting retention and pass rates, and although it is too soon to judge its effectiveness fully, in-year retention rates have improved. Courses are planned well with detailed schemes of work. Staff appraisals are used to identify and support areas for improvement in teaching and learning. Action plans as a result of lesson observations are not always followed up.

Information and communications technology

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on CLAIT and GCE A-level ICT
- good teaching and learning in many lessons
- extensive range of learning materials on the intranet
- effective widening of participation.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates on AS-level ICT and computing
- low pass rates on ECDL for adults in 2003
- insufficient specialist resources to support students' practical work
- underdeveloped links with industry.

Scope of provision

54. Full-time courses are offered in GNVQ intermediate ICT and AS level and GCE A level in computing and ICT. There are 180 students enrolled on these courses, most of whom are aged 16 to 18. Around 250 adult students are enrolled on a range of part-time courses including word processing, CLAIT, and ECDL. These courses are offered at the college's main site and at six centres in the local community.

Achievement and standards

55. Retention and pass rates on GCE A-level ICT are consistently high and well above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Over the period 2001 to 2003, the overall retention and pass rates on AS-level computing and ICT have been below the national averages. Most GCE A-level students achieve the grades predicted by their GCSE results but AS-level students often fail to reach their predicted target grade. Retention and pass rates on CLAIT are high. In 2003, the pass rate on the ECDL course for adults was low, at 56%. The average attendance at lessons during the inspection was good.

56. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Many students contribute enthusiastically to classroom discussions, and draw on their own experiences to analyse new concepts and to handle conflicting arguments. GNVQ students develop good project-planning skills, which they use effectively in order to complete their assignments. Most students make good use of the Internet for research. Students can confidently manage the

files on their computers. AS-level students are able to create interactive spreadsheet macros linked to on-screen buttons. GCE A-level computing students develop a good understanding of the concepts and actions of HTML code. Part-time adult students develop in confidence. Most adults effectively develop their IT skills and many are able to use sophisticated functions in multi-sheet spreadsheet applications.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
CLAIT (one year)	1	No. of starts	334	267	179
		% retention	84	84	83
		% pass rate	77	86	77
IBT II/ECDL (one year)	2	No. of starts	132	81	101
		% retention	84	95	84
		% pass rate	68	86	56
GNVQ intermediate ICT	2	No. of starts	*	25	18
		% retention	*	96	83
		% pass rate	*	50	87
AS-level ICT	3	No. of starts	66	97	80
		% retention	68	79	81
		% pass rate	82	66	68
AS-level computing	3	No. of starts	54	46	53
		% retention	65	93	72
		% pass rate	94	86	61
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	22	20	19
		% retention	77	100	95
		% pass rate	100	90	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	21	19	22
		% retention	38	100	95
		% pass rate	63	100	86

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

57. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan and implement a range of appropriate and demanding activities to engage students' interest. In the best lessons, teaching is planned well. The more able students are given extension exercises or asked to evaluate other students' work. Extra support is provided to students who need it. Students' understanding is checked regularly. Teachers provide clear explanations that help students to progress. In many lessons, students are set individual achievement targets, which are reviewed at the end of lessons. Students are expected to identify what they have learnt and e-mail their work to the teacher. Students have become adept at accurately predicting the amount of work they can successfully complete. In some lessons for part-time adult students, teachers work effectively in pairs to support students with a wide range of different abilities who are on courses at different levels. In the less successful lessons, students are given too little to do. In one lesson, the teacher's presentation was too long and students were not given sufficient encouragement to participate and became bored.

58. The intranet for ICT is good. It contains a comprehensive range of information such as course notes, exercises, tests and assignments. It is much appreciated by students and used well. However, there are insufficient specialist resources to support the teaching and learning of practical work. The number of theory lessons compared to practical lessons on some courses is too high. For example, on AS-level computing, the majority of lessons are in classrooms with no computers. Students' access to computers outside of lessons is inadequate.

59. Assessment practices are good. Coursework is accurately marked. Students' work is returned promptly with good advice and guidance to help them improve. Cross-marking is used effectively to standardise assignment grades before they are submitted to awarding bodies. Students' progress is carefully monitored and recorded. During induction, students are screened to identify their additional learning needs. Where a need is identified, additional support is provided quickly. Not all students take advantage of the support offered to them. Students receive good support from their subject teachers, both in and out of lessons.

60. Provision in the community is good. Courses are offered at levels 1 to 3 and provide good progression opportunities. Adult students value being able to study near their homes and extend their knowledge of computing. Links with schools are good. Pupils are able to attend college for taster sessions in computing. Links with industry are underdeveloped. Computing students have insufficient exposure to the computer industry to support their career aspirations. Students are not involved in subject-specific work experience or enrichment activities. Students have good access to the college's central careers, guidance and counselling service.

Leadership and management

61. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Teachers on ICT and computing courses for students aged 16 to 18 work well together. On the provision for adults, there is some sharing of good practice and teaching materials. There are regular course team meetings. Records of meetings do not clearly identify the actions that need to be taken in order to bring about improvements. The self-assessment report failed to identify some of the weaknesses in the provision.

Sports, leisure and tourism

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses
- stimulating and challenging teaching on sports courses
- good range of additional qualifications and enrichment activities
- wide range of provision and good progression routes
- high standard of students' written work and practical skills.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AS-level physical education
- low pass and retention rates on community sports leaders award.

Scope of provision

62. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses in sport, leisure, and travel and tourism from entry level to level 3 which provide good progression routes. Courses include GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism, AVCE courses in travel and tourism and leisure and recreation, national certificate in sport, and AS-level and GCE A-level physical education. A good range of short courses is offered including the Association of British Travel Agents Certificate (ABTAC) and the Welcome Host certificate. At the time of the inspection, there were 180 full-time students. There is no provision for part-time courses.

Achievement and standards

63. The pass rates on most courses are high and well above the national averages. In 2003, the pass rates on GCE A-level physical education and AVCE travel and tourism were 100%. The retention rates were also high and above the national averages for sixth form colleges. However, the retention rate on AS-level physical education has been consistently below the national average in the three years from 2001. Over the period 2001 to 2003, the pass rate on the community sports leader award has been unsatisfactory and retention rates have been low.

64. The standard of students' written work is good. Assignments and portfolios are presented well. Many students make good use of ICT to complete their work. Portfolios contain a wide range of work, which is appropriately detailed and vocationally relevant. Students are confident, well motivated and enthusiastic about their studies. Many students develop good research skills. Students work well together and display good teamwork.

Students on sports courses understand the link between theory and its practical application. Many students reach high standards of sporting performance and represent their chosen sport in local and national competitions. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sports, leisure and tourism, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
Community sports leader award	1	No. of starts	26	27	46
		% retention	58	63	59
		% pass rate	0	24	0
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	25	21	22
		% retention	92	90	91
		% pass rate	87	89	95
AS-level physical education	3	No. of starts	34	52	26
		% retention	79	71	81
		% pass rate	89	95	90
AVCE travel and tourism (single award)	3	No. of starts	*	25	15
		% retention	*	96	97
		% pass rate	*	96	100
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	34	18	26
		% retention	71	94	92
		% pass rate	96	100	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

*course did not run

Quality of education and training

65. There is much good teaching particularly on sports courses. In the most effective lessons, clear objectives are set and teachers use a variety of methods to maintain students' interest. Teachers are enthusiastic and lessons are stimulating, challenging and often good fun. In an AS-level physical education lesson, the teacher used tai chi to explore coaching

styles and effectively linked theory to practice. In a tourism lesson, students were challenged to reflect on cultural stereotypes and its impact on the travel industry. Sports coaching lessons give students the opportunity to plan, deliver and evaluate specific sports coaching activities. Students demonstrate a high level of skill. Teachers encourage students to use personal examples from their work placement or experience of work. Teachers emphasise current industry practice and ensure that students understand the relevance of their learning to future employment. In the less successful lessons, teaching is dull and fails to stimulate students.

66. Assessment practice is well planned and thorough. Assignments are designed well and vocationally relevant. Students are assessed regularly. Their work is marked fairly and accurately with constructive and encouraging feedback to help them improve. Students' progress is carefully monitored.

67. Pastoral and academic support for students is good. Students value the support they receive from their teachers. There are effective arrangements to identify students' individual learning styles and those in need of additional support. Appropriate procedures are in place to support students causing concern. Induction is planned well and helps students settle into their course and college life quickly.

68. There are good opportunities for students to gain qualifications in addition to their main course of study. These include awards in sports coaching, life-saving and first aid at work. A wide range of enrichment activities includes visits to local firms and overseas study trips. The college has a sports academy which is open to students of all levels of ability. Many students take part in individual and team sports competitively or for recreation.

69. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects that they teach. Most sports teachers have a specialist teaching qualification and are involved in national and local sports initiatives. Some travel and tourism teachers have recent and relevant vocational experience, which benefits students. Teachers make good use of professional development opportunities and some are examination board moderators and specialist tutors for national organisations. There is a good range of specialist practical facilities. Teaching rooms for travel and tourism are pleasant and have attractive displays. Some classrooms for sports theory are poor and are not accessible to students with restricted mobility.

Leadership and management

70. Leadership and management are good. Communication across the curriculum area is effective. Team work is good and teachers share good practice. Teaching teams meet regularly and focus on curriculum issues to raise standards. Appropriate strategies are in place to improve pass and retention rates. Students' attendance is monitored rigorously and absences are followed up promptly. Less successful courses have been withdrawn and new courses introduced that meet the needs of students better.

Health, social care and public services

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high retention and pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching
- good standard of students' work
- good progression into relevant careers
- effective widening of participation.

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of ILT to support learning
- poor attendance on public services
- insufficiently challenging teaching in a minority of lessons.

Scope of provision

71. The college offers a good range of courses in health and social care and public services. At the time of the inspection, nearly 180 students were enrolled. Full-time provision includes the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) at certificate and national diploma levels and the AVCE in health and social care. There are 54 full-time public services students on level 1, first and national certificate courses. Some 57 part-time adult students are enrolled on NVQ care and early years programmes. Nearly all full-time students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

72. Retention and pass rates are high on many courses. The retention rates on many courses are significantly above the national averages. In 2002 and 2003, the pass rates on the CACHE certificate and the AVCE health and social care were 100%. The retention and pass rates on the CACHE diploma are consistently well above the national averages. Over the period 2001 to 2003, the retention rate on the CACHE certificate declined to below the national average. The standard of students' work in portfolios and in lessons is good. Students gain in confidence and display good communication skills. They ask many questions and debate issues in order to improve their understanding. Students develop good team-working skills. Students are well prepared for employment. Progression to subject-related careers is high and a good proportion of students progress to the next level of study. In 2003, all CACHE diploma students gained relevant employment and around two-thirds of

AVCE health and social care students progressed to nurse training. Attendance is high on health and social care but low on public services courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health, social care and public services, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
First diploma public services	2	No. of starts	*	20	15
		% retention	*	95	93
		% pass rate	*	79	79
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	*	17	16
		% retention	*	71	50
		% pass rate	*	**	100
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	20	20	18
		% retention	85	80	78
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	15	16	***
		% retention	80	100	***
		% pass rate	92	100	***

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

*course not running

** unreliable data

*** fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

73. Much of the teaching is good. Schemes of work are comprehensive and teachers use the preferred learning styles of students to plan activities. Lessons are thoroughly planned to ensure that the learning needs of individual students are met. Teachers use a variety of effective techniques in lessons, including question and answer, group and pair work, presentations and projects to motivate students. Extension work is provided to challenge the more able students. Students in a public services lesson worked in groups and developed accurate map-reading skills using a carefully constructed worksheet. In most lessons, teaching is lively. Interesting learning materials make good use of examples from the sector

and effectively engage students' interest. In a minority of lessons, the tasks are dull and insufficiently challenging to inspire students.

74. All health and social care and childcare students have a weekly work placement. They work with young children, disabled young people and the elderly. In lessons, teachers frequently make effective use of students' experience of work to link theory to practice. In one lesson, students worked in groups to prepare interesting and appropriate materials to use on their placement with children and elderly people. In another lesson, students worked on a campaign against speed driving and produced high-quality, attractive banners, posters and information. There is a good range of enrichment activities on public services that enhance students' learning. These include relevant visits, a residential experience, and guest speakers from the armed forces, the royal marines, and the police and ambulance service.

75. Teachers are well qualified for the subjects they teach. Many public services teachers are current sports practitioners and health and social care teachers have recent experience of the industry. Across the curriculum area, there is insufficient use of ILT to support learning. Computers and other audio-visual equipment are not available in some of the classrooms used by public services courses. Students' access to computers outside of lessons is poor.

76. Monitoring and assessment arrangements are generally effective in promoting students' progress. Students are set individual targets and these are reviewed and revised at regular meetings with their tutor. In a few examples the targets set for students are not precise enough. The assignment schedule is well planned. Assignments are well written and strengthen the students' learning. Students' work is carefully marked. Feedback from teachers provides clear guidance to students on how they can improve their performance.

77. Support for students is good. At the start of their programme students are screened in order to identify their additional learning needs. Appropriate support is given where it is needed and it is provided either at individual support sessions or during lessons. However, many learners are reluctant to take up the support that is offered to them.

78. The college is responsive to the needs of students and has widened past participation effectively. Part-time evening provision is offered to adults who are in employment and need to complete qualifications in care and early years in order to remain in employment. The range of public services courses has been extended and now provides better progression opportunities for students. The CACHE certificate and diploma are designed to enable students to complete at an accelerated pace.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management of the area are good. Course management is good and course files are well maintained. Realistic course targets for improvement are set and regularly monitored. All staff contribute to the self-assessment report and the process is thorough. Action is being taken to address identified weaknesses. Teachers are encouraged

to undertake continuous professional development. Equal opportunities are promoted well through the curriculum and are studied as an integral part of all courses.

Visual and performing arts and media

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on many courses
- good teaching in media studies and drama
- high standard of practical work
- thorough marking of students' work
- good curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on a minority of courses
- insufficient use of ILT to support learning
- poor specialist accommodation for drama, music and three-dimensional design.

Scope of provision

80. There is a wide range of AS-level and GCE A-level courses in art and design, photography, dance, drama and theatre studies, music, performance studies, film studies and media studies. GCSE courses are available in art, music and media studies. At the time of the inspection, there were 297 students on art and design courses, 174 students on film and media studies and 153 on performing arts courses. The majority are full-time students aged 16 to 18. Part-time courses for adults include City and Guilds photography, GCSE interior design, and recreational drawing and painting. Around 40 adult students are enrolled on these courses.

Achievement and standards

81. Pass rates are high on many courses and well above the national averages. GCE A-level media studies students are particularly successful. In 2002 and 2003, the retention and pass rates in media studies were 100%. The proportion of students achieving high grades on GCE A-level art and design and drama, and GCSE art and media is consistently high. Over the last three years, GCE A-level art and design and media studies students have consistently achieved higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. In 2003, the retention rates on GCE A-level art and design, AS-level performance studies, and GCSE art were below the national averages.

82. The standard of students' work is high. Dance students devise imaginative individual pieces based on photographs and poems. In most lessons, students are confident and have developed good communication skills. In media studies theory lessons, students respond well in discussions and ask informed questions. Media students effectively use ICT to produce interesting short films and music students make good use of ICT for compositions. Fine art students use a good variety of media with increasing confidence. However, students' skills in three-dimensional design model-making are not well developed. Creative solutions to design briefs in photography and graphic design are supported by careful and critical evaluation of research. A good range of students' high-quality art work is displayed throughout the college.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts media, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE art studies/ fine art	2	No. of starts	33	37	36
		% retention	21	78	69
		% pass rate	100	100	84
AS-level art studies/fine art	3	No. of starts	54	99	107
		% retention	83	87	85
		% pass rate	82	72	80
AS-level media studies	3	No. of starts	42	45	54
		% retention	86	82	83
		% pass rate	83	84	98
AS-level performance studies	3	No. of starts	12	24	21
		% retention	75	83	81
		% pass rate	67	95	100
GCE A-level art and design	3	No. of starts	*	28	21
		% retention	*	100	81
		% pass rate	*	93	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE A-level media studies	3	No. of starts	41	20	19
		% retention	54	100	100
		% pass rate	95	100	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

83. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned and students' progress in class is good. The best lessons are challenging and fun, with strong participation from students. In drama, practical skills are taught well, with good development of movement and voice skills. Students benefit from performing challenging plays such as *Our Country's Good*. Music students confidently use an ICT programme to interpret classical compositions. Art students are encouraged to apply theory in their practical work. One student used research from Allen Jones' sculpture and female stereotyping to develop practical work in photography, sculpture and painting. In three-dimensional design, students designed the set for the college production based on *Chicago* and developed their teamwork and production skills. In media, three-dimensional and graphic design lessons, there is insufficient use of ILT to support learning. In the less successful lessons, teachers spend too much time talking and there are too few opportunities for students to be involved in discussion and reflect on their work.

84. Teachers are well qualified. Many teachers have recently participated in professional updating. The standard of accommodation is mixed: the art block has a large studio with excellent natural light; classrooms for graphic design and three-dimensional design are cramped and untidy with poor lighting and accommodation for music students is inadequate. The music room is not sound-proofed which disturbs other music and drama lessons. There are limited facilities for media students, with too few computers in the editing suite. The drama studio has insufficient storage space for props and this restricts performance space. The main hall is a very good space for productions, but it is frequently unavailable for rehearsals.

85. Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good. In photography and graphics, students benefit from detailed written feedback. In AS-level drama, constructive and encouraging verbal feedback helps students gain in confidence and improve their practical skills. Students' essays and project work on AS-level and GCE A-level media studies are carefully marked with clear guidance on what students need to do in order to improve. Parents are kept well informed of students' progress and attendance at college.

86. There are strong links with local schools. Courses meet the needs and interests of students. There is a wide range of enrichment activities. These include a film club, life drawing group, lunchtime music performances and visits to local and regional theatres and galleries. Students are involved in operating the college radio network and producing and performing in drama productions.

87. Support for students is good. Teachers provide a high level of support for students outside of lessons. Weekly group tutorials are used to disseminate general college information. Careers advice and guidance is readily available. Students are encouraged to progress to HE, and they receive good support with their applications.

Leadership and management

88. Leadership and management are good. Quality assurance is rigorous. The outcomes from course self-assessments have led to improvements including changes in teaching styles. Teachers meet regularly and share good practice. Communication between managers and teachers is good. Teachers are consulted on strategy and feel involved in planning. Staff development opportunities are good. Teachers new to the college benefit from a supportive mentoring system. Equal opportunities are explored and promoted well through the curriculum. Drama students perform plays which focus on race and gender issues, and in media studies diversity issues are debated through analysis of newspapers.

Humanities

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade in law is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- good teaching resources to support learning
- extensive range of enrichment activities in geography and history
- good subject support for individual students.

Weaknesses

- low and declining pass rates in AS-level law
- low retention on AS-level government and politics
- slow progress to address weaknesses in law.

Scope of provision

89. The college offers AS-level and GCE A-level courses in classical civilisation, geography, government and politics, history, law and religious studies. Critical thinking is taught at AS level to full-time students and pupils from local secondary schools. There are around 450 enrolments on humanities courses; nearly all students are aged 16 to 18. The largest numbers are on law courses, with 130 students, and history, which is taken by 121 students. AS-level history and law are available part-time in the evenings. A full-time Access to HE course offers daytime provision for 35 adult students.

Achievement and standards

90. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are high. In 2003 all subjects had a 100% pass rate. The proportion of students achieving grades A or B is higher than the national average for sixth form colleges on most GCE A-level courses. Many students achieve grades higher than those predicted by their GCSE results. AS-level pass rates exceeded 90% for most subjects. In law, the most popular subject, pass rates at AS level are low and declining. Pass rates have fallen from 87% in 2001 to 68% in 2003. The number of AS-level law students achieving high grades is poor and a low proportion of them progress from AS level to GCE A level. Pass rates on the Access to HE programme are good. Retention rates are around the national average on most courses. In AS-level government and politics, retention rates have improved but remain low. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was satisfactory, at 85%. Poor punctuality disrupted the start of a minority of lessons.

91. The standard of students' work is good in the majority of subjects and they demonstrate good academic knowledge and understanding. In most lessons, students are encouraged to develop and extend their analytical skills. In history, students effectively analysed statistical data and historical evidence to debate the economic impact of the railways. Geography students used knowledge gained through fieldwork to make detailed judgements on land use in Southampton. However, in a law lesson, many students were unable to use the example of a court case to explore the problems faced by a jury at the end of a criminal case.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
AS-level geography	3	No. of starts	36	41	33
		% retention	92	85	88
		% pass rate	76	91	93
AS-level government and politics	3	No. of starts	17	24	19
		% retention	71	75	79
		% pass rate	83	94	93
AS-level history	3	No. of starts	45	54	60
		% retention	91	89	88
		% pass rate	100	94	98
AS-level law	3	No. of starts	51	91	69
		% retention	88	90	90
		% pass rate	87	74	68
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	37	27	35
		% retention	62	100	97
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	23	26	37
		% retention	57	96	89
		% pass rate	85	84	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

92. There is much good teaching in humanities. The majority of lessons are well planned with a range of different activities. The learning resources are carefully written to stimulate students and engage them in purposeful discussions. In the most successful lessons, good use is made of discussion, group work and question and answer techniques to develop students' powers of analysis and evaluation. For example, in a history lesson, students worked in groups and looked at the foreign policy decisions of the government in the run up to the Second World War. This led on to a lively discussion of the complex pressures facing Neville Chamberlain's Cabinet. In a classical civilisation lesson, students discussed the relationship between Hermes and Kalypso to consolidate their understanding of the relative positions and status of the Greek Gods. In the less effective lessons, the teaching lacked clear objectives and students were not informed of what was expected from them. In these lessons, the teacher talked too much and did not question the students or encourage them to express their views. The less confident students were content to sit and listen, too much time was spent making notes and the teacher did not check that learning had taken place

93. Most of the teaching rooms in humanities are dedicated to specific subjects and are well resourced. Teachers produce high-quality and stimulating learning materials for students to use, many of these are available on the college's intranet site. Students make good use of the internet for research and homework. Geography fieldwork is supported by high-quality specialist equipment, including digital cameras. Most teachers are well qualified but some lack subject-specific expertise.

94. Students receive good academic support. Homework is set regularly and marked promptly. Grades predicted from GCSE scores are used as students' target grades and these are monitored regularly. Good use is made of subject assessment forms to identify skills development, strengths and weaknesses. Teachers' feedback is detailed and includes constructive suggestions for improvement. However, there are examples of marked work that contains insufficient comments or suggestions to help students improve. Additional help and subject support is regularly provided for students outside of lessons. Several students within the humanities area receive support for learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

95. There is a very good range of enrichment activities to support learning in history and geography. Visits to First World War battlefields in Belgium and France and meetings with

holocaust survivors extend the opportunities for learning in history. In geography local fieldwork and residential visits to Dorset, Gambia and the USA inspire students to undertake further study and research.

Leadership and management

96. Leadership and management of humanities are good. There are good communications and teachers work well together within subject teams. Course teams meet regularly and discuss issues of students' progress, teaching and learning methods and coursework moderation. There are common schemes of work, to which all staff contribute. Course review and target setting are well established. Self-assessment is thorough, detailed analysis of students' achievements, lesson observation outcomes and students' views are used to identify strengths and weaknesses. Action plans have led to improvements in pass rates and retention rates on most courses. However, in law, there has been slow progress in addressing identified weaknesses.

Social sciences

Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE A-level psychology and sociology
- highly effective teaching and learning resources
- thorough feedback that promotes student learning
- rigorous self-assessment that leads to improvements.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in AS-level sociology and psychology and GCSE sociology
- insufficient challenge for the more able students
- poor punctuality in GCSE sociology lessons
- insufficient specialist subject rooms.

Scope of provision

97. Psychology and sociology are offered at AS-level and GCE A level and GCSE. Of the 331 students enrolled on AS level and GCE A level, over two-thirds study psychology. The vast majority of students are full-time and aged 16 to 18. Some 45 full-time students are enrolled on GCSE sociology. Evening courses are available in AS-level and GCE A-level and GCSE psychology. The majority of the 60 students on the courses in the evening are part-time adults. Around 50 adult students are enrolled on the Access to HE programme.

Achievement and standards

98. Most retention rates are around national averages. Pass rates in GCE A-level sociology are very good and were 100% in 2002 and 2003. Pass rates on GCE A-level psychology have improved since 2001 but remain slightly below the national average for sixth form colleges. AS-level pass rates have declined since 2001; in 2003 they were significantly below the national averages in both psychology and sociology. The A* to C pass rate in GCSE sociology is very low. Retention rates are low on the Access to HE programmes with pass rates of 100% in the last three years. Attendance in GCSE lessons is poor, whereas in AS level and GCE A level it is good.

99. The standard of most work seen in lessons is satisfactory. In some lessons, students demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the subject they are studying. They are encouraged to develop skills of analysis and evaluation. For example, students in sociology

considered the effectiveness of a range of social science research methods. In GCE A-level psychology, students critically evaluated psychological theories, such as behaviourism, and could use them confidently to explain phobic behaviour. GCSE sociology students can briefly explain topics with support from the teacher. However, their written work is less well developed.

A sample of retention and pass rates in social sciences, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE sociology	2	No. of starts	24	15	22
		% retention	68	67	82
		% pass rate	41	30	22
AS-level psychology	3	No. of starts	114	128	122
		% retention	77	81	80
		% pass rate	84	80	74
AS-level sociology	3	No. of starts	41	87	71
		% retention	88	69	93
		% pass rate	2	87	96
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	63	45	51
		% retention	59	93	94
		% pass rate	92	95	98
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	37	22	28
		% retention	57	100	96
		% pass rate	90	100	100

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

Quality of education and training

100. Lessons are planned and managed well. Teachers use a variety of stimulating teaching and learning methods to actively involve students and promote learning. Students' learning styles are identified at enrolment and these are used to plan activities. For example,

in a psychology lesson, oranges, apples and cardboard cylinders were used to demonstrate how perception varies. Good use is made of discussion, group work and question and answer techniques. In a GCSE sociology lesson, students worked well in groups to discuss job adverts and place them into the different types of work. Students demonstrated and improved their understanding of the sociological definitions of work.

101. Carefully constructed worksheets support learning and meet the needs of most students. Teachers provide effective individual support to students who find the work difficult and need additional help. In some lessons, there are insufficient activities to challenge the more able students. Whilst most lesson plans include extension activities, these are often completed by the whole group. In a minority of lessons, there is an over-reliance on subject workbooks. Direct questioning and other teaching methods were not used effectively to check students' learning.

102. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Most of the teaching is in specialist subject rooms. They are resourced well with class sets of textbooks, access to computers and electronic whiteboards. They have a strong subject identity with stimulating displays of students' work. Library resources are adequate and used well, although there is insufficient study space and access to computers. Teachers have developed very good learning materials including a CD-ROM of key terms and revision notes for sociology students. The psychology and sociology intranet sites have a good range of learning materials, interactive activities and links to other relevant sites.

103. Monitoring and assessment of students' progress is thorough. No formal assessment policy exists in sociology. Homework is set regularly and returned promptly. Teachers' feedback is detailed and constructive; in most cases, it clearly shows what students need to do in order to improve. Assessments are well recorded. These records are used effectively by teachers to plan lessons and monitor students' progress. Grades predicted from GCSE scores are used as students' target grades. These are regularly reviewed by personal and subject teachers and used effectively to encourage students to improve. In some lessons, written class work and students' files are insufficiently monitored. Enrichment is good in psychology and includes visits to the local zoo and revision conference.

104. Student support is good. Students make regular use of the informal academic support from teachers out of lessons. All students are screened at the start of their course to identify their additional learning needs. Appropriate support is provided quickly. There are no procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the support given to social science students.

Leadership and management

105. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teachers work well together in small subject teams and communication is good. Regular meetings are used to share good practice and to review and develop teaching materials. Staff training needs are identified and most teachers have attended relevant courses. Lesson observations have taken place across the area but the outcomes are not routinely used to improve departmental teaching and learning methods. Self-assessment makes good use of data and students' feedback. Strengths and

weaknesses are realistic. Some strategies to improve retention and pass rates have not yet been implemented.

English and modern foreign languages

Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- above average proportion of high grades on AS-level and GCE A-level English courses
- good teaching in English that motivates students
- very good assessment and monitoring of students' work
- good subject support for individual students
- highly effective management and leadership of English.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates in GCSE English
- poor pass rates in AS-level and GCE A-level Spanish.

Scope of provision

106. There is a wide range of provision in English and modern foreign languages. In English, AS-level and GCE A-level students can take English language, English literature and English language and literature. There is also a GCSE English course for students who wish to improve their grade. At the time of the inspection, over 400 students were taking a GCE A-level English course; the vast majority were aged 16 to 18. Recruitment is low in modern foreign languages with around 50 students studying French, German and Spanish at AS level and GCE A level. Part-time introductory courses in French, Italian and Spanish are available in the evenings.

Achievement and standards

107. Pass rates on GCE A-level English courses are high. In AS-level and GCE A-level English the proportion of students achieving grades A or B is very good and above the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates on AS-level and GCE A-level German and Spanish are low. In 2002 and 2003 pass rates on GCE A-level French were 100%. The pass rate on AS-level French has improved consistently over the last 3 years, to 91% in 2003. The A* to C pass rate in GCSE English improved in 2003 but remained below the national average. Retention rates in GCE A-level English language and literature and Spanish were 100% in 2003. Retention rates are low on AS-level English language and literature, French and Spanish. Retention rates on all other courses are satisfactory and around the national average.

108. The standard of students' written work in English is high. Students quickly develop independent study skills and powers of analysis. They effectively use specialist subject terminology and can support their views with textual evidence. In English lessons, students readily participate in discussions and debates. Students of modern foreign languages confidently use the target language in oral and written work. In GCE A-level French lessons, students routinely ask and answer questions and participate in detailed discussions. Attendance is good in advanced level classes. However, in GCSE English, attendance, at 32%, is poor.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English and modern foreign languages, 2001 to 2003

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	115	144	127
		% retention	77	77	76
		% pass rate	53	32	44
AS-level English language	3	No. of starts	57	67	61
		% retention	88	85	90
		% pass rate	96	95	87
AS-level French	3	No. of starts	38	33	20
		% retention	68	85	55
		% pass rate	38	68	91
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	24	24	*
		% retention	75	96	*
		% pass rate	89	100	*
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	66	36	42
		% retention	65	97	90
		% pass rate	74	100	97

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2001	2002	2003
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	30	22	29
		% retention	67	100	90
		% pass rate	85	100	96

Source: ISR (2001 and 2002), college (2003)

* fewer than 15 students enrolled

Quality of education and training

109. Most teaching is good or better and none is unsatisfactory. Teachers have very good knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, their subject. In many lessons, teachers carefully plan a range of stimulating activities that engage and interest students. In a GCE A-level English language lesson, students completed a well-structured gapped handout to fully appreciate the acquisition of language skills by children. Teachers have good relationships with their students. Students are encouraged to think critically and to express their views clearly. Pair and group work is used effectively to share ideas and develop oral skills. In English language and literature, students worked in pairs and analysed a range of critics' views on Iago's character in *Othello*. Students participated in a stimulating and lively debate as they presented and defended their views to the class. Modern foreign language teachers make particularly good use of the language being taught. In a French lesson, a French visitor and the French assistant encouraged students, who were working in pairs, to respond confidently and develop their reading and listening skills.

110. Teaching staff are well qualified. Many of the English teachers are examiners and use this experience to help students improve their examination techniques. Teaching accommodation is good and classrooms have attractive displays of relevant work. Although the language laboratory is out of date, it is used effectively to develop modern language students' speaking and listening skills. The intranet includes useful revision materials and activities to support students' learning. Enrichment opportunities in English and modern foreign languages are good. English students undertake theatre visits and a trip to the First World War battlefields in Northern France. In modern foreign languages there is an annual trip to France, Germany and Spain. Native speakers of the language support learning in one-to-one conversation sessions.

111. Students' work is marked thoroughly. Detailed mark sheets include the assessment criteria for each course. The feedback given by teachers is particularly helpful in identifying what students need to do in order to improve their grades in examinations. Students' progress is closely monitored against individual targets. Teachers willingly give of their time outside of lessons to support students who need extra help or who want to improve their grade.

Leadership and management

112. Leadership and management are good. Teamwork is good, with effective sharing of resources and discussion of good practice by teachers. Self-assessment is effective and course reviews accurately identify strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate action has been taken to improve retention and achievement in English. Targets are set and monitored. Students' feedback is analysed and the results are used to make improvements. Modern foreign languages is a small but cohesive department. Subject specialists organise the teaching of different languages. They work well as a team and have developed good links with local secondary schools to try and increase the number of students on modern foreign language courses.

Part D: College data

Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age

Level	16–18 %	19+ %
1	12	39
2	32	36
3	56	16
4/5	0	1
Other	0	8
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004.

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Science and mathematics	691	32	11
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	74	1	1
Business administration, management and professional	404	230	10
Information and communication technology	478	454	14
Retailing, customer service and transportation	65	28	1
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	328	60	6
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	222	79	5
Visual and performing arts and media	389	39	7
Humanities	654	187	13
English, languages and communication	1,005	169	18

Curriculum area	16–18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments (%)
Foundation programmes	33	85	2
Unknown AOL	547	214	12
Total	4,890	1,578	100

Source: provided by the college in 2004

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16–18			19+		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
1	Starters excluding transfers	456	244	342	410	459	409
	Retention rate %	79	87	80	71	77	81
	National average %	79	80	78	71	70	72
	Pass rate %	75	84	85	86	77	91
	National average %	70	66	71	67	70	75
2	Starters excluding transfers	944	662	804	373	367	388
	Retention rate %	70	74	79	67	77	75
	National average %	80	80	81	71	72	71
	Pass rate %	82	90	90	91	79	89
	National average %	80	85	84	70	68	71
3	Starters excluding transfers	1200	2398	2360	202	311	322
	Retention rate %	63	71	87	75	69	71
	National average %	75	80	89	63	64	69
	Pass rate %	87	83	85	81	69	85
	National average %	85	86	88	65	67	75

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 2000 to 2002: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, Learning and Skills Council, September 2003.
2. College rates for 1999/2000 to 2001/02: College ISR.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	74	24	2	102
Level 2 (intermediate)	73	21	6	33
Level 1 (foundation)	75	25	0	8
Other sessions	50	50	0	4
Totals	74	24	3	147

Notes